



**EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE
ABIDJAN BUREAU**

MAB-6002
8 January 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS

THROUGH : Acting Chief, Operations Group

SUBJECT : Monthly Report--Abidjan Bureau--December 1985

I. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. A long-festering border dispute between Mali and Burkina Faso broke into armed conflict on Christmas Day when Malian aircraft attacked three Burkinabe towns and army units advanced on the ground. Mali insisted that its "counteroffensive" had been launched to drive out Burkinabe armed units that had invaded under cover of a territorial census. Scores of civilian casualties were reported on both sides during the next few days while an endless collection of self-appointed mediators, including Libya, sought to bring a halt to the fighting. Finally, on 30 December, the two sides agreed to a cease-fire arranged by the Nonaggression and Defense Aid Agreement, a regional organization of West African States. As part of its intense coverage, the bureau arranged for special deliveries of the most significant media items to embassy consumers and the Ivorian Government, which played a major role in concluding the cease-fire and excluding the Libyans from the peace process. Amembassy Ouagadougou, in requesting a minimize when the fighting broke out, specifically exempted the "exceptionally timely and valuable" FBIS reporting.

2. Earlier in the month, Abidjan and London Bureaus provided extensive coverage of Libyan leader al-Qadhdhafi's flashy swing through four West African states -- including Mali and Burkina Faso -- in the company of some 100 Kalashnikov-wielding bodyguards. Amembassy Accra took the opportunity of its reporting on al-Qadhdhafi's visit to Ghana to mention that "in what we now take too often for granted," FBIS provided its "always excellent and detailed" coverage.

3. Other developments monitored during the month that attracted considerable consumer interest included the Ivorian Government's announcement that it was resuming relations with Israel, the arrest of a dozen senior officers in Nigeria for plotting against the government, and the France-Africa summit attended by almost all heads of state in the region.

4. The many news developments showed up in the bureau record-high wordage of 307,670. Wordage for the year totaled 2.6 million words, reflecting a continuing yearly decline from the 1982 high of 2.8 million.

5. As of 1 January, Paris AFP English "Africabeams" discontinued its 0330-0430 GMT shortwave transmissions which the bureau used to record for delayed processing after its normal opening of business. Discontinuation of this transmission will have little impact on coverage as the 0700 transmission normally repeated all major stories carried earlier.

B. Communications

At the beginning of the month, problems in the bureau's communications circuit necessitated altrouting traffic [] and hand-carrying bureau tapes to the embassy for transmission for several days. Engineer [] was able to trace the problem to loose wiring at the embassy's end of the circuit.

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II. ADMINISTRATION

A. Ruth Davis, State Department language training officer, met with the bureau chief, deputy chief and editor [] on 19 December as part of a tour of the post to discuss possible designation of Abidjan as a model language post. Designation would entail a French-language capability, at various levels from elementary to fluent depending on the position involved, as a prerequisite to assignment to Abidjan. Ms. Davis was told FBIS officers share the post consensus on the professional and personal benefits of French-language capability at this post. On the other hand, FBIS would have more difficulty than the Department and other large agencies in assigning language-trained officers; the bureau could not leave a position vacant while a designee received training; and the bureau's editorial staff would have considerable difficulty maintaining language training at post because of their shift work.

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B. An embassy proposal to change the official USG designation of the Ivory Coast to Cote d'Ivoire in accordance with Ivorian preference was rejected by the Department although the Department suggested the post itself should use the designation when it felt appropriate.

C. The regional medical officer disclosed unofficially plans to transfer the medevac point for Abidjan and most African posts from Frankfurt to London later this year or early next year.

D. The post allowance classification rose from 25 to 30 in December as the dollar continued its slide.

IV. VISITS

A. JAO Director Peter Spalding to the bureau 9 December for a briefing on operations and facilities and to discuss procedures for alerting JAO offices to developments of local interest.

[Redacted Signature]

Chief, Abidjan Bureau

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Attachments:

Monthly Production Report

cc: Chief, Swaziland Bureau
Deputy Chief, London Bureau
Chief, Abidjan Bureau